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Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly for Follow-Up to the World Summit for Children in 2001
First substantive session
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Update on the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly for Follow-Up to the World Summit for Children in 2001

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to resolution 54/93 of 7 December 1999, in which the General Assembly decided to convene a special session of the Assembly in 2001 to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children and the achievements in the implementation and results of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s and to undertake a renewed commitment and consider future action for children. The resolution also decided that the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session would take place from 30 May to 2 June 2000.

The purpose of the present report is to provide an update to the Preparatory Committee on progress in the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children in 2001.

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I. Introduction

1. At the World Summit for Children which was held in New York on 30 September 1990, 71 Heads of State or Government signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s,[1] committing themselves to achieving a set of time-bound goals and mobilizing the human and financial resources to do so. The World Declaration and the Plan of Action have been endorsed by 181 countries, 155 of which prepared national programmes of action for children. These set forth a vision of a "first call" for children by establishing 7 major and 20 supporting goals considered achievable by 2000. In addition, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most ratified human rights treaty in history, embodies the commitment of States parties and the international community to respect, fulfil, promote and protect the rights of children.

2. The General Assembly, in resolution 45/217 of 21 December 1990, welcomed the adoption of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action and urged all States and other members of the international community to work for the achievement of the goals endorsed therein. The Assembly also urged donor countries, in particular, to assist developing countries and agencies of the United Nations system, including their governing bodies, to support follow-up to the World Summit.

3. General Assembly resolution 54/93 of 7 December 1999, entitled "Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children", outlined the basis for the preparatory process and for the review of achievement of the goals agreed upon at the World Summit. The General Assembly recalled resolutions 51/186 of 16 December 1996 and 53/193 of 15 December 1998 and the report of the Secretary-General on progress on the implementation of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children.[2]

II. Organizational session of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly for Follow-Up to the World Summit for Children in 2001

4. The Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly for Follow-Up to the World Summit for Children in 2001 held an organizational session on 7 and 8 February 2000 in New York. The Bureau for the Preparatory Committee was elected and the report of the Preparatory Committee on the organizational session was adopted.[3] The report included a decision regarding the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as the provisional organization of work for the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, to be held in New York from 30 May to 2 June 2000. The Committee also decided to defer its decision on arrangements for future sessions to its first substantive session. A first report on preparations for the special session was submitted to the organizational session.[4]

III. Scope of the review of implementation of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action and current initiatives

5. In accordance with resolution 54/93, the Secretary-General will submit to the special session, through the Preparatory Committee, a review of the implementation and results of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action, including appropriate recommendations for future action. The review will also elaborate on the best practices and obstacles encountered in the implementation, as well as on measures to overcome those obstacles. The Secretary-General has asked the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to coordinate the preparation of this review, which will encompass the work being done at national, regional and international levels.

A. National reporting

6. Following adoption of resolution 54/93, in which the Assembly invited Governments to undertake reviews of progress achieved since the World Summit for Children and encouraged appropriate national preparatory activities for the special session, the Secretary-General in January 2000, addressed a communication to all permanent representatives of Member States to the United Nations and Observers. In the communication, he called upon Member States to assist and support the preparation of his report to the General Assembly special session. On 9 March 2000, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund wrote to all permanent representatives and observers, on behalf of the Secretary-General, providing detailed guidance on the preparation of national reports on the implementation of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children and on recommendations for future national and international action. The reports are to be submitted by the end of December 2000 as input to the preparatory process and the review of the Secretary-General. A suggested list of indicators for monitoring progress at end-decade was attached as an annex to the letter of the Executive Director.

B. Regional reporting and preparatory activities

7. Resolution 54/93 also invited relevant organizations, in particular UNICEF, as well as regional and subregional organizations, to undertake reviews of progress achieved since the World Summit and encouraged appropriate regional and international preparatory activities with a view to contributing to the preparations for the special session and building partnerships for and with children. A number of activities have already been undertaken at the regional and subregional levels and others are in the process of being organized. The activities will contribute to the review of achievements of the outcome of the World Summit and help determine future action. The information below includes only some of these initiatives.

8. In Africa, a regional consultation on "A Vision for Children in West and Central Africa in the beginning of the Twenty-first Century" was hosted by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire from 30 November to 3 December 1999. In October 1999, preparatory national consultations were organized by 10 UNICEF country offices in the region. From September to December, a team of consultants and experts from the regional office drafted a situation analysis on "Children at the End of the Twentieth Century". The consultation brought together more than 170 participants: representatives of Governments, civil society, universities and colleges, national and international NGOs, bilateral and multilateral organizations, United Nations agencies, national committees for UNICEF, elected officials and children. The themes focused on the child, family, community, society and State and resulted in the "Abidjan Appeal", in which participants pledged their commitment and appealed to all stakeholders to take steps to implement the recommendations made to promote respect for and fulfilment of children's rights.

9. In February 2000, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF organized a consultation in Libreville on child trafficking for exploitative labour purposes, bringing together 150 delegations from 20 West and Central African countries, including decision makers, development partners, NGOs and media representatives. The discussions strengthened the knowledge and understanding of the issue and helped to bring about agreement on strategies to combat this rapidly growing phenomenon in the region.

10. In April 2000, a group of experts held a seminar on children affected by HIV/AIDS, and adopted the African Common Position on Children and AIDS for submission to the meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Labour and Social Affairs Commission in Algiers, which was held the following week. The outcome of that meeting will be presented to an AIDS conference in Ouagadougou in May 2000.

11. Ministers of Social Affairs and Labour of member States of OAU met in April 2000 in Algiers to review, *inter alia*, issues related to child protection in the context of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. In May 2000, Ministers of Health will meet in Ouagadougou and will include on their agenda a review of the goals of the World Summit in order to advise OAU on the best framework of action for an African agenda for children in the twenty-first century. That same month, the Government of Togo will host a meeting of ministers of the region in charge of children's and women's rights, and women ministers in

charge of planning, finance, labour and justice. A first ladies' forum on child soldiers will be held during the OAU Summit in Lomé in July 2000. The summit itself is expected to deal with certain key issues concerning children, especially the threat of HIV/AIDS to development in Africa.

12. Key scholars will take part in a forum on the problems of Africa, which is being organized by the regional office of UNICEF for Eastern and Southern Africa and is to be held in late 2000, as a contribution to the intellectual content of a global movement for children. Outcomes of the forum will help define a vision of Africa in which the rights of children as citizens are fulfilled.

13. The Economic Commission for Africa is organizing a high-level African development forum in October 2000, focusing on the theme "HIV/AIDS: the greatest leadership challenge for Africa", which will spotlight a major issue impacting the well-being of Africa's children and development efforts. A Pan-African meeting is planned for the first quarter of 2001 in collaboration with OAU. The objectives of the meeting are to report on the achievement of the goals of the World Summit by African States and to propose an agenda for the African child that will provide input for the special session.

14. Various country-level activities are being organized for adolescents in both North Africa and the Middle East. From this process, a number of youth representatives will be chosen to participate in a regional conference for youth. A regional forum on the media in 2000 is also being organized, as is a regional meeting for representatives of civil society and NGOs, including women's organizations, for which private sector involvement and funding will be sought.

15. In the months leading up to the special session, the League of Arab States, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, regional development funds and United Nations agencies are planning to hold a high-level intergovernmental meeting for children, which will lead to the adoption, by the region's Governments, of a regional declaration on a future agenda for children.

16. In South Asia, high-level representatives of the regional media met at the end of February 2000 in Kathmandu to explore partnerships and to encourage the media to take a leadership role in helping children. Follow-up activities will take place primarily at the country level.

17. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF held a high-level meeting in Kathmandu in March 2000 on cross-border cooperation for polio eradication, which could provide a model for a regional end-decade review. Preparations are under way to update the regional database (ChildInfo) and to produce an "Atlas of South Asian Children and Women", based on new data from all countries. Data will be analysed in the last quarter of 2000 and results and trends will be reviewed early in 2001 during a regional consultation.

18. With the cooperation of eminent persons and regional institutions, an advocacy document entitled "Investing in South Asian Children", is being prepared and will be published before the summer of 2001. A consultation in Pokhara, Nepal, in March 2000 brought together South Asian experts to contribute to the process.

19. Each country in the region is undertaking a national review of achievements and shortcomings in meeting the World Summit and national goals for children. UNICEF and South Asian partners are also reviewing progress on a region-wide basis. Although the timing of the next summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has not been determined, it is hoped that the outcome of country-level and regional reviews will be placed before Heads of State at that time.

20. In East Asia and the Pacific, a number of events have been held or are being planned in preparation for the special session. A workshop was held in Bangkok on processing of multiple indicator cluster survey data, which will be followed by a second workshop in Bangkok later in 2000. These meetings are intended to promote a greater focus on data gathering, processing and quality control as well as analysis and presentation for the end-decade, country-level assessments.

21. In addition, several initiatives of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are planned, in cooperation with other partners. A publication entitled "The ASEAN Vision for Children" is being prepared to document practices in child rights implementation and identify areas in need of strengthening. The results of the study leading to the publication will be used to formulate a work plan on regional programmes on child rights in ASEAN member States beyond 2000.

The study is scheduled to be launched during the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok in July 2000.

22. A preparatory meeting for the fifth East Asia and Pacific Ministerial Consultation is scheduled for the first quarter of 2001. The Consultation will be held in Beijing in the second quarter of the year, with the participation of Governments, children and youth, representatives of the private sector, non-governmental and civil society organizations and bilateral and multilateral organizations.

23. An Asian media forum on child rights is proposed for late 2000 or early 2001 to encourage active involvement of the media in sensitizing the public and leadership on the numerous opportunities for promoting the well-being of children and development in the Asia and Pacific region in the coming years.

24. UNICEF offices in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic States are providing support to Governments conducting end-decade reviews. Existing sets of official data are being complemented by multiple indicator cluster surveys that are being carried out in 10 countries. NGO partners, including youth organizations, are being encouraged to participate actively in the process. In addition, discussions are taking place to hold a consultation with Governments and civil society organizations in the lead-up to the special session. A proposal to conduct a special survey on young persons is being formulated. The UNICEF regional office in Geneva will draft a regional trends analysis as a contribution to the preparatory process.

25. The "MONEE" project of the International Child Development Centre, which monitors the transition in social conditions and public policy in Central and Eastern Europe, is preparing its eighth regional monitoring report. The report, which is to be launched before the special session, will contribute to the review of implementation of the Plan of Action of the World Summit and identify trends and future challenges. Discussions are also taking place with the Government of the Russian Federation regarding a regional consultation of Governments and NGOs in Moscow in February and March 2001.

26. The regional NGO Committee for Children is considering the practical aspects of its participation in a global movement for children, as well as the role of NGOs in the process leading up to the special session. A meeting with the Committee, UNICEF and key national NGOs will be held in June 2000 in Geneva. Relevant linkages with the European Union and cooperation programmes in the region are being created.

27. The fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, to be held in Jamaica in October 2000, will be a crucial event in responding to the increasing challenges of social policy issues in Latin America and the Caribbean. A preparatory meeting was held in Barbados in March 2000 and the Government of Peru, as secretariat *pro tempore*, is developing guidelines for the reporting process of the meeting and for the end-decade review, to be distributed to all countries.

28. The Coordinating Unit for the fifth Ministerial Meeting was invited to attend the April 2000 meeting of the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee (IACC) for the follow-up to the World Summit for Children in Latin America and the Caribbean. Members of IACC, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), ILO, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNICEF and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), will be joined by representatives of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Children and adolescents will be a central theme at the tenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, to be held in Panama in November 2000.

C. Assessment of emerging issues

29. In its resolution 54/93, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to assist the Preparatory Committee by providing a report on emerging issues to be considered at the substantive session of the Committee, which will be held from 30 May to 2 June 2000. In response to that request, a report on "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century" (A/AC.256/3) has been prepared by UNICEF to inform the deliberations of the substantive session. The report will first be discussed by the

UNICEF Executive Board at its annual session, from 22 to 26 May 2000, with a view to providing Board comments and advice to the Preparatory Committee. A wide range of actors and partners, including Governments, national and international organizations, United Nations agencies, bilateral agencies and civil society organizations, were consulted during the development of the report.

30. In April 1999 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, the comprehensive life-cycle approach to early childhood care was presented at the annual meeting of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, an international inter-agency group comprising both United Nations and non-United Nations agencies. Representatives of leading NGOs involved in early childhood programmes were also present. The life-cycle approach is an essential part of the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness initiative, which is jointly supported by WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank, as well as several bilateral agencies and NGOs. The approach was also presented and discussed at the World Symposium on Early Childhood Care and Education, which was organized by the Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles and held in Santiago in March 2000. The Symposium adopted a declaration on early childhood education in the twenty-first century, which was signed by representatives of Governments, United Nations agencies, NGOs and universities.

31. Several discussions of emerging issues have also taken place at recent regional conferences. A meeting of specialists in education was held in Florence, Italy, in October 1999, at the International Child Development Centre. A large number of participants attended the World Bank Human Development Week in March 2000. At the World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000, an Education for All Framework for Action was adopted.

D. Role of the United Nations Children's Fund in the review process

32. A preliminary organizational structure to support the Preparatory Committee and related activities has been established at UNICEF. The Deputy Executive Director, Alliances and Resources, is responsible for leading the preparatory process and providing support to the special session, assisted by a small secretariat. The Deputy Executive Director chairs an inter-divisional steering committee in which the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF participates.

33. UNICEF is supporting the review process through its ongoing programmes. Support will be provided for the end-decade review for, *inter alia*, country and regional data collection and identification and analysis of achievements and trends in implementation of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action. UNICEF is assisting countries in undertaking multiple indicator cluster surveys in order to obtain updated statistics on the situation of children. It is also assisting with a review of selected national programmes of action for children, which were established to implement the World Declaration. Other areas receiving support are: a policy analysis, highlighting disparity reduction; sectoral evaluations to document the lessons learned over the past decade; analysis of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the preparation and dissemination of a summary of cross-cutting issues arising from commitments to the fulfilment of children's and women's rights made at the global conferences of the 1990s. UNICEF is developing a proposal of future actions for children for the twenty-first century, through a participatory process, with inputs from these activities.

E. Role of the United Nations system in the review process

34. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly invited all relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, including funds and programmes, the specialized agencies and international financial institutions, to participate actively in preparations for the special session. The Assembly also invited these organizations to undertake reviews of progress achieved since the World Summit for Children and encouraged international preparatory activities, with a view to contributing to the special session and building partnerships for and with children.

35. In a communication dated 24 March 2000, addressed to all members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the Executive Director of UNICEF requested United Nations organizations to provide input to the special session, for review by the

Secretary-General by 30 September 2000. The submissions should contain the contributions of the organizations to the achievement of the goals of the Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children; suggestions to identify emerging trends; key issues and challenges that affect the needs and rights of children and women; and proposals for future actions.

36. On 18 April 2000, a letter was sent by the secretariat of the special session to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the regional commissions, inviting them to provide input for review by the Secretary-General. The above-mentioned report on "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century" (A/AC.256/3) was also sent to the Special Representative and the Special Rapporteur for their information and comments.

37. The meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination in Rome, on 6 and 7 April 2000, included an update on the special sessions and conferences organized by the United Nations. The Executive Director of UNICEF drew the attention of the Committee to the special session and to its role in the review of achievements in the implementation and results of the Plan of Action of the World Summit. The Executive Director requested the advice and support of Committee members through, *inter alia*, their responses to the communication of 24 March 2000, noted in paragraph 35 above. The Committee invited its members to participate actively in the preparatory process of the special session and to contribute fully to ensuring its success (see ACC/2000/4, para. 62 *bis*). Similarly, the United Nations Development Group will include a discussion of its participation in the preparatory process of the special session as one of its future agenda items.

38. In accordance with resolution 54/93, the Committee on the Rights of the Child is taking part in the end-decade review process. This will provide an opportunity for this treaty-monitoring body to inform the preparatory process and the special session of its assessment of the major trends in the implementation of the Convention. Several meetings have been organized to discuss the participation of the Committee in the process leading to the special session as well as its input to the review of the Secretary-General in light of the Committee's role in monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Committee was also informed of decisions taken at the organizational session.

IV. Role of non-governmental organizations and other actors

A. Participation of non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process and in the Preparatory Committee

39. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly stressed the need for the active involvement of all relevant actors, among them NGOs, in the preparatory process, including in the Preparatory Committee and at the special session. Pursuant to the resolution, it was decided at the first organizational session of the Preparatory Committee, on 7 and 8 February 2000, that the work of the Committee should be open to participation of non-governmental organizations that are accredited in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996 or are accredited with UNICEF.[5]

40. The Preparatory Committee also decided that, in addition, other non-governmental organizations that are not accredited either to the Economic and Social Council or to UNICEF, but that have a collaborative relationship and partnership with UNICEF, pursuant to its mandate to obtain from non-governmental organizations having a special interest in child and family welfare the advice and technical assistance which it may require for the implementation of its programmes, will also be invited to participate in the meetings of the Preparatory Committee.[6]

41. In compliance with the resolution, a three-pronged approach has been adopted by UNICEF. First, an executive directive was sent to field offices requesting them to provide relevant data on key partner NGOs at regional and country levels. Second, national committees for UNICEF were asked to provide a list of relevant NGOs with which they work. Third, global data were collected from relevant headquarters divisions. Based on the information acquired, a list of NGOs was prepared and sent to members of the Preparatory Committee by 31 March 2000.

B. Consultation between the United Nations Children Fund and civil society organizations

42. A global consultation of civil society organizations was held in New York from 23 to 25 February 2000. Participants included 47 heads or representatives of civil society organizations, including international development NGOs; local government authorities; child-focused, youth and women's NGOs; consumer advocates; and human rights and child rights NGOs. The consultation engaged civil society organizations in a discussion on promoting a global movement for children and a leadership initiative for its advancement. The NGO Group on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in its support to national coalitions on the Convention and to other civil society organizations, has offered the use of its regional and country offices as entry points in the process of broadening social mobilization for child rights.

C. Adolescent participation and development

43. In resolution 54/93, the participation of children and adolescents in the process leading up to the special session was recognized as essential. A meeting held from 22 to 24 February 2000 at the Rockefeller Foundation Conference Centre in Bellagio, Italy, brought together a range of partners to review the component on adolescents in the report entitled "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century", and to outline priorities for activities in connection with the special session and promotion of a global movement for children. The meeting included representatives of WHO, PAHO, UNFPA, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), UNESCO, UNAIDS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the Commonwealth Youth Programme; and such international and national NGOs as the International Youth Foundation, Save the Children UK, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, International Planned Parenthood Federation and Straight Talk. The meeting also benefited from the input of young persons working on issues related to adolescent development and participation.

44. Adolescent participation is a core element of the report of a joint WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA study group on programming for adolescent health, entitled "Action for adolescent health — towards a common agenda". The issue was also included on the agenda of a workshop of the tenth Asian Paediatric Congress in March 2000. UNICEF is in the process of launching, with United Nations and NGO partners, a project entitled "What every adolescent has a right to know". A number of global strategies, such as those developed within the United Nations system, have also influenced the process. These include the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction (General Assembly resolution 54/132, annex); the UNAIDS global strategy for young people and HIV/AIDS; and the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

45. During the World Bank Human Development Week in March 2000, two sessions related to adolescents were held: the first was entitled "Investing in Adolescent Development — Why and What?"; and the second featured "Voices of Youth", a UNICEF interactive Internet forum that enables young persons to share their views on key issues.

46. For the past several years, the role of the Internet in facilitating the active participation of young persons in decision-making that affects their lives has been widely explored. Through "Voices of Youth", pilot projects are examining the communications and educational capabilities of the Internet, especially its use as a tool in programming for young people. On-line youth focus groups and interaction between youth and policy makers are now regularly organized and involve young people on the "other side" of the digital divide, from both developing and industrialized countries. The topics have included young people's role in HIV/AIDS programming, girls' rights educational needs of out-of-school youth, water and sanitation rights, and the impact of armed conflict on children and young people.

47. Finally, the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations, which will be held in September 2000, will contribute to a focus on youth and will develop momentum around issues related to young people, adolescents in particular. Activities will include a young people's consultation, a girls' education workshop and support to Internet-related activities through the Voices of Youth initiative.

V. Trust fund for least developed countries

48. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly also stressed the importance of the full participation of least developed countries in the special session and the preparations for the session, and invited Governments to make appropriate contributions to a trust fund to be established by the Secretary-General for that purpose. UNICEF, on behalf of the Secretary-General and as substantive secretariat, has put procedures in place to establish and manage a trust fund to support the participation of representatives of the least developed countries in Preparatory Committee meetings. A note verbale, dated 20 April 2000, has been sent by the office of the Secretary-General to Member States advising them of the establishment of the trust fund and encouraging them to contribute.

Notes

[1] A/45/625, annex.

[2] A/53/186.

[3] A/55/43 (Part I).

[4] A/AC.256/2.

[5] A/55/43 (Part I), chap. IV, decision 2, subpara. (a).

[6] Ibid., subpara. (b).